

WHY DEANS STAY: A QUITTER'S RESPONSE

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Not merely because of his attention to my poor utterance, I am pleased to see Michael Kelly's reaction to my *Why Deans Quit*.¹ I have been aware for some time that my words were more dour than intended. I did say that I would do it again, but not every reader seems to have noted that statement amidst the catalogue of complaints.

Several readers have informed me that they were dissuaded from candidacy for deanships by my brief account of the inherent troubles in deaning. Maybe that was too bad. On the other hand, I am not certain that a few of those dissuaded may have been well served by my advice. To enjoy being a law dean for more than a few years, you have to be a bit odd, as Michael Kelly and I seem to be. The fact remains, however gratified Kelly may have been by his work, and whatever Dean Beytagh's survey may show,² most deans do quit after tenures too brief to be of positive consequence.

Among the suspected causes of this phenomenon are a failure to match the task and the personality, and failures of support by faculties, university administrators, and governing boards. All of these possible causes may be related to a larger one, the tendency to romanticize the role of educational leadership. More than a few persons have become deans because they thought they would enjoy the affect, only to find it the most fleeting of thrills. And more than a few university administrators seem to think that a law dean should be humbly compliant inasmuch as she has been afforded the accolade of leadership. My aim was to say "*baloney!*" to all that.

I can agree with most of Kelly's observations if one deletes some of the modifiers. If my account was a bit one-sided, it certainly was not "profoundly" so. I did not say, nor do I believe, that the dean's role is materially more difficult than that of a managing partner; the dean's role may be far less difficult in some circumstances. Doubtless, there are many other comparable jobs more onerous

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1. Paul D. Carrington, *Afterword: Why Deans Quit*, 1987 DUKE L.J. 342.

2. See Michael J. Kelly, *Afterword: Why Deans Stay*, 51 MD. L. REV. 483, 498 app. (1992).

than that of law dean. Of the jobs I know something about, I would rate junior high school principal at the highest order of difficulty, and law dean well below that. Nevertheless, it is simply true that for many persons qualified for the roles, being a professor of law is a more gratifying job than being a dean. People considering the job, or who ask others to consider it, ought to know that.

On the other hand, I can now affirm that the elevated condition of being a former dean is substantial compensation for the travails identified in *Why Deans Quit*. This is not so much because people are kind to outworn deans, although in my case they certainly are, but more because one returns to the front lines of the educational enterprise with a better knowledge of self and a greatly enhanced appreciation of the self-indulgent charms of a life devoted to discourse with animated persons on topics of shared interest. Almost everyone I know who has tried it likes being a former dean. A lot.